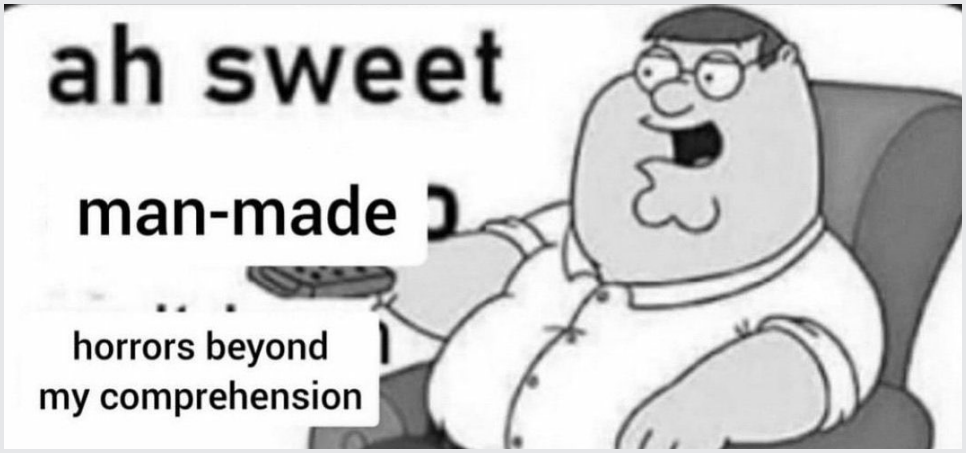
Man-made horrors beyond
my comprehension:

Accelerationism

This zine is the printed edition of an essay published on the e-newsletter Cucumber Salad.

Disclaimer: I have a very deep interest in technology, and I could actually talk about technology forever, but for the purpose of this essay I'm going to limit its definition to "recent digital and/or electronic developments and implementations done by big corporations and venture capitalist investors".



Introduction: Žižek and depression brought me here

If you follow me on any social media platform (and I'm deeply sorry if that's the case), there are big chances that you might have seen me ranting about [Accelerationism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Accelerationism) at some point. I don't expect most people I interact with on the internet to know exactly what I'm talking about when I complain about Accelerationism, so I think it would be very useful to write something introductory about how I got in touch with this subject and what are my views on it.

I don't plan on elaborating a lot on the definition of Accelerationism because there already are hundreds of articles with this purpose that probably do a better job than I ever could. Instead, I'm going to explain how I got to know this subject, how my views on it changed over the years and how I perceive its ideological presence in my daily life.

I don't know exactly how I first got in touch with the concept of Accelerationism, but I imagine it must have been from some [Slavoj Žižek](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slavoj_%25C5%25BDi%25C5%25BEek) video. I used to interact with Žižek's ideas ironically for a while, but (thanks to the fragile nature of the human mind) I actually took some of his thoughts into consideration, especially during my nihilistic depressive phase.

I was introduced to Accelerationism as an ideology that had the goal of overcoming capitalism by implementing politics that exacerbated its intrinsic contradictions. It's important to take into consideration that when I first got in touch with these ideas _I was extremely depressed and nihilistic_. That being said, it just made lots of sense to me to develop policies and practices in order for capitalism to self-destruct.

I remember being very tired (and I still am, to this day) of seeing revolutionary and progressive movements being coopted by capitalism and reduced to marketing strategies. When I first started reading about Accelerationism, I was very intrigued by how deeply chaotic and destructive its ideas were. It seemed to accept and consider the terrible consequences of what it would actually take to overcome capitalism. Accelerationism really resonated with the deeply hopeless and negative perception

of reality that I had when I was introduced to it. Chaos and destruction were not only inevitable, but they were the way towards a new world.

It's important to say that, back then, it seemed to me that Accelerationism was an idea that was very "out there" and that wouldn't actually gain any conscious traction, but would rather be achieved by the fact that society was inevitably marching towards a capitalist overload.

The Trashcan of Ideology

> *"We went to the New York World's Fair, saw what the past had been like, according to the Ford Motor Car Company and Walt Disney, saw what the future would be like, according to General Motors.*
>
> *And I asked myself about the present: how wide it was, how deep it was, how much was mine to keep."*
>
> — Kurt Vonnegut, Slaughterhouse-V

When I started to "get into" Accelerationism I was working at a technology research institute and I was very focused on mindlessly following "tech" trends like blockchain and facial recognition. I actually remember being very excited about blockchain and talking about the possibilities of public infrastructure implementations, to the point of being called a "blockchain utopian" by coworkers.

What I now understand is that I was facing "technological development" as a certain and righteous future, and that's what most of us actually do. Last week I was watching this Disney movie called *Tomorrowland* (in which [George Clooney only starred because of his gambling debt](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pk_u_49NZmE)) and it made me think a lot about how we're ideologically brainwashed since childhood to have a very limited perception of what technological development is, what progress is, and what the future should look like.

In *Tomorrowland*, the image of a perfectly developed future was a vertically dense city, with glass buildings, harnessed nature, and extravagant digital and electronic tools.

The thing about being blindly desperate to overcome the unsatisfying present is that it leaves little room in our heads to actually conceive what should come next, and companies like Disney prey on the little time we have to develop any kind of genuine creativity to limit and manipulate our perceptions and ideas, but that's a topic for a different essay.

What I want to say is that *Tomorrowland* is only one of the hundreds of films that makes us understand, accept and work on developing the ideal future as a heavily artificial and overwhelmingly digitally dependent environment.

So, back in 2019, there I was, eating directly from the trashcan of the "technological development" ideology. A piece of pop culture that really resonated with me back then (and still does, because it is one of the most important pieces of pop culture ever made in the history of humanity) was *Ghost in the Shell*. I was very interested in transhumanism. I remember being a little bit obsessed about the "limitations of being human", and how a new being would be able to overcome them.

As it turns out to be true, sometimes you just need someone to offer you a little bit of a change of perspective, and that's what happened when I got in touch with Chinese philosopher Yuk Hui, in order to prepare some artwork for a lecture he was going to give in Rio.

They Live glasses emoji: when?

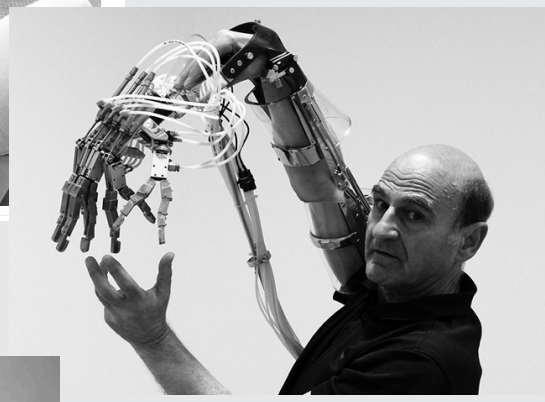
I don't think I'll ever be able to fully express how important it was for me to get in touch with Yuk Hui's writings. And it kind of happened by accident.

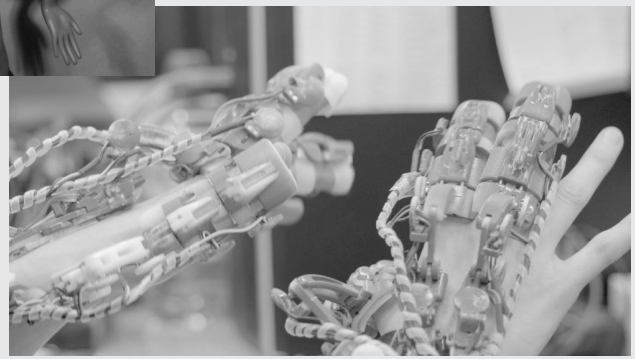
I would usually get a very short and objective briefing about the artworks I needed to develop at the institute, but the person who usually worked on the briefings didn't have enough time to wrap her head around the subject, so she suggested I did some research on the topic and drew my own conclusions.

I remember the first article I read on him was [an interview for E-flux](https://www.e-flux.com/journal/102/282271/cybernetics-for-the-twenty-first-century-an-interview-with-philosopher-yuk-hui/), and I was immediately captivated by what he had to say:

> "Our computers, smartphones, and domestic robots are no longer mechanical but are rather becoming organic. I propose this as a new condition of philosophizing. Philosophy has to painfully break away from the self-contentment of organicity, and open up new realms of thinking. [...]

> This is also why evolution is creative, since it is fundamentally organological in the sense that evolution is also a process in which human beings are obliged to constantly create new organs (e.g., figures), while not being blinded by them, i.e., by not regarding them as the totality of reality. Mechanism wants to explain life, without realizing that it is only a phase of life, e.g., a figure. [...]





To ask a concrete question: Is someone who has an artificial arm and an artificial eye no longer human, since within this person the organic and the mechanistic are no longer opposed? Or from another perspective, is transhumanism, with its belief that the entire body can be replaced and enhanced, actually built upon a linear way of thinking, one that expresses an extreme humanism? On the surface, transhumanism seems to want to get rid of the concept of the human. However, this gesture is only camouflage. Transhumanism is a quintessentially humanist approach to the world, since all is captured within a metaphysical gaze."

I remember being struck by the impression that this person was somewhat articulating a "formal philosophy of _Ghost in the Shell_", but from a very interesting and compelling perspective. I talked to him a few weeks after reading this interview about this impression, and he told me that *Ghost in the Shell* is actually his favorite film. That made me even more interested in further researching his writings.

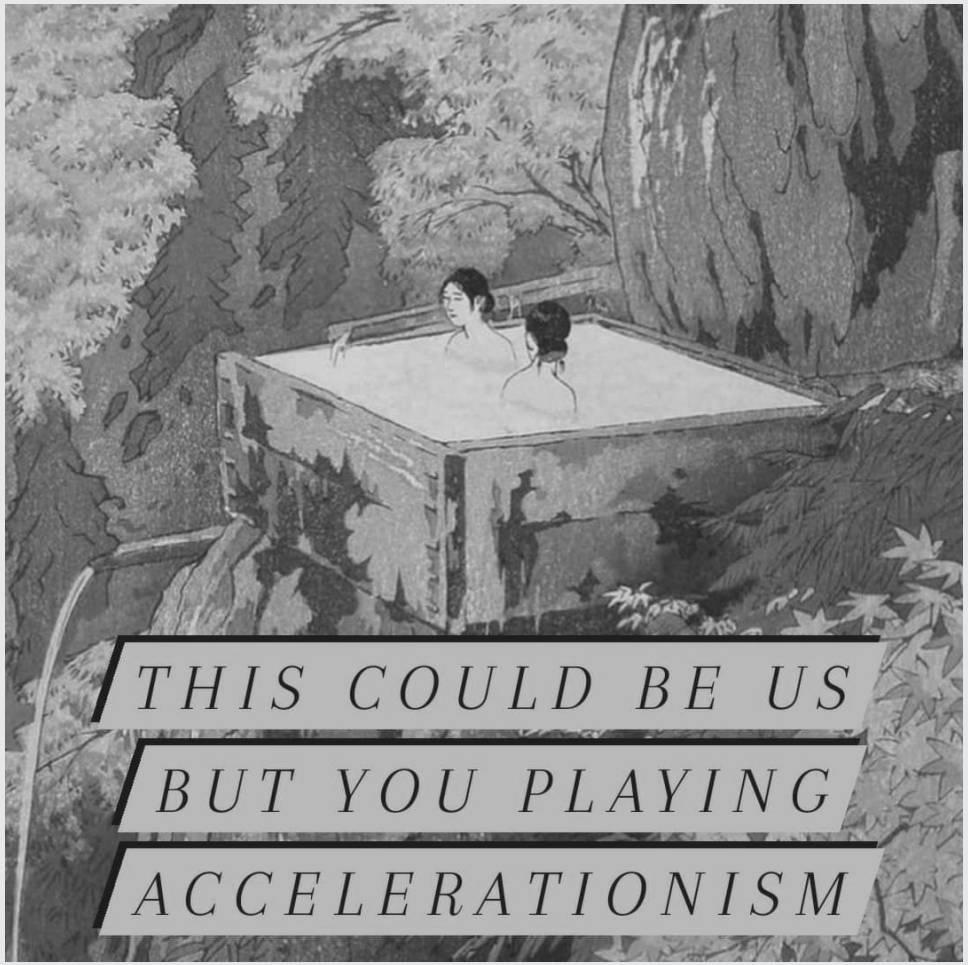
I remember the importance given to [The Enlightenment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Age_of_Enlightenment) when I was in school. I was taught that those philosophers built the pathway to the ultimate, most reasonable and correct way of understanding the world, and until I read Yuk Hui's writings I had never questioned that. I also had never got in touch with how those ideals were insidious and omnipresent in contemporary western society ([who would have thought that everything is, indeed, ideology](https://archive.org/details/the-perverts-guide-to-ideology-2012-hd)?).

Yuk Hui's writings introduced me to many interesting and important ideas and concepts, but the one that really changed my whole perspective towards Accelerationism was presented during his talk on [Technological Singularity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Technological_singularity) at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro.

I had previously heard about Technological Singularity back in 2016, but I dismissed it as some Silicon Valley fever dream bullshit and never gave it much thought.

After Yuk Hui's talk I understood that Accelerationism is in fact the umbrella under which Technological Singularity exists. Technological Singularity is one of the main goals of Accelerationism.

Later, I also learned that Accelerationism isn't only controversial because of its radically dangerous ideas, but also because those ideas can be adopted by both "radical leftists" (contemporary Marxists who are completely lost in life and need to go out and touch some grass) and [right wing extremists]



(https://www.counterextremism.com/content/accelerationism) (in retrospect, the [Helter Skelter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Helter_Skelter_(scenario)) can be considered an Accelerationist event within a context of extreme racial tension, for example).

But, most importantly, I understood that what I had dismissed as an "out there" philosophy and a "Silicon Valley fever dream" were actually ideas being heavily invested in and implemented by oligarchs in contemporary society.

People who ruin the world: what are they thinking?

It's important to make it clear that people who run/ruin the world have strong philosophical and ideological beliefs. These people discuss ideas and concepts that will shape their actions and aid their reasonings.

I truly believe that it's of essential importance to understand what those people are thinking in order to be able to identify the ideology of the ruling class. And, right now, that ideology is Neo-liberal Accelerationism.

The bleak individualist hellscape in which we currently live was designed by politicians and technologists aligned with the ideology of anarcho-capitalism for the last 40 years. Much of what we were led to believe and do in our lives for the past decades was informed by this deeply flawed and dangerous ideology.

I believe that, because of the imminent collapse of society (in what we desperately want to believe to be Late Capitalism For Real This Time™), Accelerationism seemed to be the perfect ideology for the powerful to subscribe to, after the crack high of anarcho-capitalism wore off.

Accelerationism accepts and embraces the constant growth expansion ideology of capitalism. That means that the elites don't have to stop doing any of the harm they're currently imposing upon the world in order to be able to progress into a new phase of society.

It's an ideology that tells the elites to keep doing what they're doing and, somehow, society will still evolve into a new and refreshed post-capitalist existence. According to the elites, this new phase of society will, obviously, maintain our current status quo. And the idea is that the main tool to get us to this new moment in history is digital technology.

As I have previously mentioned, the main goal of Accelerationism is to reach an apocalyptic moment that is called

Technological Singularity. I won't explain that into detail because you can find lots of information of the definition of Singularity, but I can tell you that this moment would configure the ultimate End of Enlightenment and render humans completely intellectually redundant.

It's important to understand that influential and powerful people in the world are currently investing in efforts to reach Technological Singularity (who wouldn't want to own the most powerful machine in the world, right?). If you watch the documentary about the collapse of WeWork, for example, you'll learn that SoftBank has the biggest venture capital investment fund in the world to invest in technology start-ups, precisely [because the CEO wants to help achieve Technological Singularity](https://futurism.com/softbank-ceo-the-singularity-will-happen-by-2047). That's the amount of power people who believe in this kind of shit have.

We can't lose sight of the fact that SoftBank invests in any kind of start-up that has a remote chance of success and, after the numbers fail to deliver and the investments are withdrawn, the most fragile workers have to be laid-off. That's what happened at WeWork, that's [what happened at Quinto Andar](https://www.suno.com.br/noticias/quintoandar-faz-corte-de-funcionarios-bbb22/). Same investor, same consequence: the workers who were the weakest links were out of a job without any previous warning from their employees. That makes us understand that the investments made on the name of this ideology have very real negative consequences for workers.

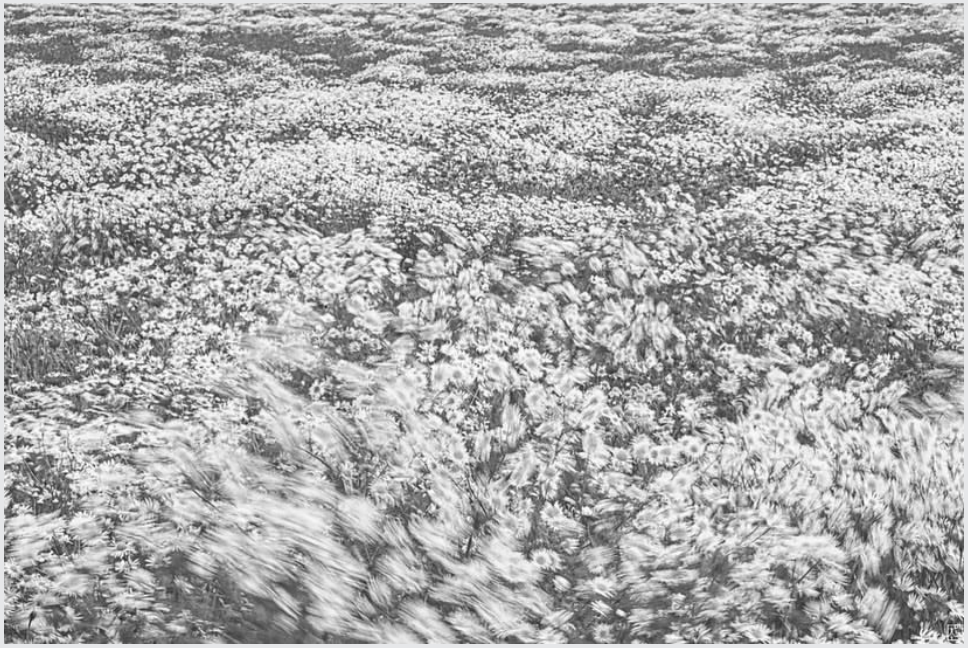
From the bedside table to omnipresent ideology

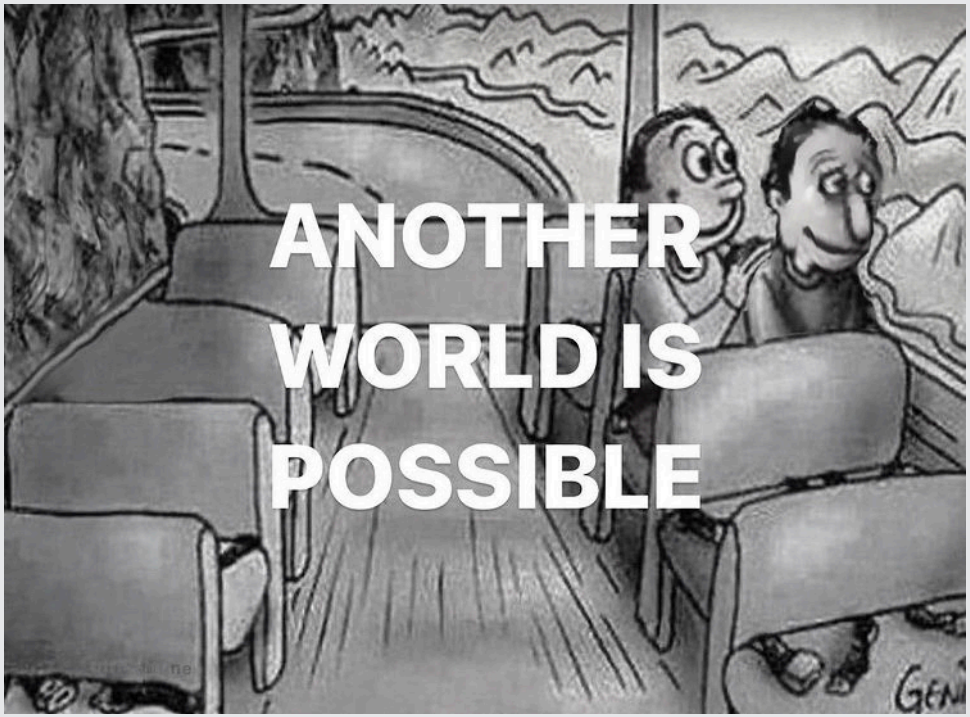
One of the goals I had in mind when writing this essay was to explain clearly how ubiquitous the Neo-liberal Accelerationist ideology is today.

I was raised in a generation that takes technological development as an inherently good and necessary investment. It follows the Enlightenment ideal of progress and development of knowledge through reason. For some people, it would seem like a very ignorant standpoint to be against any kind of technological development.

My point is, the elite needs us to welcome the ubiquity of digital technological development in our lives, and to effectively work in order to implement and develop these tools and resources. That's why we're told that doing nonsensical things like installing Alexas in our homes is a reasonable type of decision.

These types of tools are not developed to make our lives





easier. They are developed to steal our data, nurture artificial intelligence and machine learning databases, and enhance the dominance of [Surveillance Capitalism](https://theintercept.com/2019/02/02/shoshana-zuboff-age-of-surveillance-capitalism/).

The idea that products like Alexa are developed to make lives of ordinary people more practical is a gaslighting lie. The idea that all kinds of technological development are justified is a lie. This overwhelming exacerbation of technological inventions is a consequence of a desire from the elites to further establish their dominance in society. And that's especially easy to do through shady platforms like centralized social media.

When [Netflix releases a series about how the "future" is going to look like](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0hgZPvMU7So), and it's all about a society completely integrated with digital technological tools, that is neo-liberal accelerationist ideology. That kind of content is supposed to make us accept and desire a future that's an apocalyptical individualist nightmare in which we lose control over our privacy and data in the name of tools that gaslight us into thinking they're making our lives more practical.

We need to become critical of pieces of media coming from centralized platforms like Netflix telling us what the future should look like, we need to become critical of the tools shady companies like Amazon are persuading us into putting inside the privacy of our homes. Do you really think Amazon feels any kind of sympathy for its consumers that's any different than it has towards its workers?

The digital technology-dominated future is being imposed upon us by the elites. This future does not represent any kind of utopia of convenience, but it's a dystopia of surveillance and individualism. Don't be fooled by the sleek UX design. [Remember: Le Corbusier was a fascist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Le_Corbusier).

Reclaiming the Future

I truly believe that it's essential to take a few steps back and redefine what we understand as technology and what should our relationship with it as a society be. Don't let a [pancomputationalist](https://www.are.na/cucumber-salad/on-pancomputationalism) like Yuval Harari tell you that everything there is to life can be explained by a computer. How horrible would it be to live in such a poorly simple world that a computer can fully grasp its complexity.

We have reduced our understanding of technology to a very limited and flawed view of digital technological development that makes us lose perspective of our collective power of developing, owning, and distributing technology.

When we think of the future, we think in values, and the future that we are being forced into building doesn't carry any of the positive values we aspire. How would the future look like if it was built around the values we want to achieve as a society? Would it be a Pinterest minimalist house full of cameras and Alexas? [Or would it be a beautiful garden by a river where we can watch the bees pollinate](https://www.are.na/emanuel-f/slow-technology-locally-grown-and-grass-fed-1515708893)?

It's time to reclaim our power to imagine and build a better collective future, and the first step is to be able to question the ideas of progress that are imposed upon us.

With Love, 🌼🐝
Ana Luisa

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